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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELMOPAN 000333

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN (ROIS BEAL), USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/16/2018

TAGS: PREL PGOV PBTS BH

SUBJECT: (U) UK INTERESTED IN COORDINATING SUPPORT FOR
BELIZE-GUATEMALA BORDER DISPUTE RESOLUTION

REF: BELMOPAN 327

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Leonard Hill
for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) The UK has been pleasantly surprised by the progress Belize and Guatemala have made in moving their border dispute to the International Court of Justice (ref) and is looking at ways to support the two countries' efforts.

Matthew Forbes, FCO Section Head covering Central America, told Charge that the UK has proposed to Belize that the OAS might establish a fund that could be used by both countries to help pay for costs associated with the referenda to take place before an ICJ referral as well as the court costs for the case. Forbes said the UK would contribute and the FCO would be asking other potential donors including Spain to contribute as well.

¶2. (C) Noting the high estimated costs of arguing the case before the ICJ, Forbes said that the UK could not on its own cover all the bills but was willing to make an early contribution to keep the momentum going. He said that the UK was ready to provide money for public education campaigns in both countries in advance of the referenda, and had allocated US\$400,000 for initial legal work.

¶3. (C) In addition, the UK Defense Advisor has discussed with the Belize Defense Force (BDF) the possibility of supporting confidence building measures including joint training and exercises between the BDF and the Guatemalan military. The focus would be along the Sarstoon River where there have been some incidents. The BDF and Belize Coast Guard hope to establish a more permanent presence in the area and to initiate more contacts and possibly joint patrolling of the river with the Guatemalans.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: FM Elrington, although saying "the UK created this problem, they should pay to fix it," has already asked us for financial support for the ICJ case (ref). An OAS-administered fund to support the peaceful resolution of this long-running border dispute could be a useful way forward. END COMMENT.

HILL